

PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
2022 HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT BUDGET
August 26, 2021

Human Services Board Members Present: Baumann, Burke, Cavanaugh, Nasep, Shimulunas, Williams

Board Members Excused: Henrickson, Ruggirello

Board Members Absent: Agnew

County Staff Present: Dodge, L. Fure, Joas, Randolph, Ziegelbauer

CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing for input into the 2022 Human Services Budget was called to order at 4:06 p.m. by Human Services Board Vice-Chair Bob Cavanaugh. Vice-Chair Cavanaugh read the Ground Rules for testifying.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Vice-Chair Cavanaugh introduced the first speaker to give testimony - Donna Firman.

I am the President of Prevent Suicide Manitowoc County, on the board of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), a member of the League of Women's Voters team that is studying the feasibility of a mental health court, and also the Co-Chair of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorder Coalition of Healthiest Manitowoc County. I am very involved in mental health issues here in Manitowoc County.

My priority today is not to ask for a bucket load of money, which is probably surprising to you. My priority today is to get you to think a little differently about the money and how we can all work together. Consider that about the worst thing that can happen at Human Services is suicide. Once there is a suicide that's it, no hope, no second chances, no treatment it's all over, and the most vulnerable population both nationally and in Manitowoc county for suicide risk is middle-aged, white men.

Right now, we view suicide prevention as something we do as a crisis, that's how we typically think of suicide prevention. We call in the Sheriff's department, they scale down the person and work with them to help them not to complete suicide. We do the same thing, we teach QPR classes and that's a crisis intervention modality that we use. But we think of it differently at Prevent Suicide Manitowoc County. We think of suicide prevention as good mental health. If we have good mental health we have less suicide, it's that simple. We like to look at our investment in what we do with our resources in terms of prevention at the mental health level rather than the crisis level. The same with substance misuse disorder, if we invest in prevention and good mental health we have less substance misuse down the road. So, it all goes back to good mental health.

We know that there is a return on investment when we invest in good mental health. According to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors the economic investment of expanded diagnosis and treatment of depression has a return on investment of \$7 for every dollar spent. How do they come up with that number, well if you listen to SAMSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) a certified community behavioral health clinic showed more than 30% increase in client's mental health functioning, 19% decrease in the use of illegal substances in the last 30 days, nearly 50% decrease in homelessness, and more than 63% decrease in emergency visits for behavioral health issues and more than 60% decrease in time spent in correctional facilities in 30 days, that's where you get your return on investments, you don't spend it in correctional facilities, you spend it on good mental health programs.

So how do we get there, the bucket is only so big and I understand that, you only have so much money to spend. I don't think that Health and Human Services nationally, or locally here, can do it on their own and I don't mean that in an offensive way. I mean that one agency cannot take on all the mental health programs in Manitowoc County and do everything. We have to work together, we have to collaborate. I think it's going to take a little different thought process, one that doesn't look at the amount of money we have and design programs around the budget. But one that looks at the needs of the community and creatively leverages all available resources to meet those needs. That means government, private, corporate and non-profit partnerships bannin together to make true and lasting community impact.

For Example, did you know that Prevent Suicide Manitowoc County has trainers, peer support specialists some funding and a desire to collaborate? Did you know that NAMI has over 200 Nationally renowned evidenced based programs that can be brought to Manitowoc County using volunteers for a very reasonable cost? Did you know that there are grant makers who will fund just the type of collaborations I am talking about? They are called Community Impact grants. Do you know that there are Community Impact models around the country that we can learn from? We need to stop thinking about numbers and start thinking about solutions. Money never was the end-all be-all and it never will be. I believe that collaborations are the solution.

I beseech you to talk with me and other like-minded community members before you finalize the budget. Think big, think how we can use our resources. I know you can't give us all the money that we need for mental health services. I hope you'll increase it, because the need is there. But I also know that if you choose you can innovate and that costs nothing. I can give you a very poignant perspective from Prevent Suicide Manitowoc County. We are counting on you to collaborate and work together and expand our thinking – people are dying out there. Thank you for your attention.

Written testimony from Mary Wallace:

I am writing in support of two funding issues for the Human Services Board to consider. The first is the continuation of the Drug Court. Last year, people concerned about the continuation of the court were told not to worry because funding was there through 2021. I am aware that Drug Court personnel are writing for grants and I hope that effort is successful. However, the Drug Court has proved it value and cost savings to the county and I hope the County Executive and County Board will be in favor of supporting the court with county funds. I have recently attended two Drug Court graduations and was so impressed with the progress

made by the graduates from being in jail to working, paying taxes and contributing to the community. That would not be possible without the intervention of the Drug Court staff and the support of community services.

In addition, the Drug Court Coordinator is currently managing what amounts to 3 jobs, court coordinator, case manager and AODA services supervisor. That is not sustainable for any one person and also prevents the addition of any other treatment court, such as a Mental Health Court, which would benefit community residents. Funding for additional staff in this area is clearly needed.

The second area of concern is the Children and Families Division which is also understaffed. If Human Services Department management ask for additional staff in this area, please believe that they are needed. Prior to retirement, I was the supervisor of the Child and Family Services Unit and can speak from experience when I say that the number of children with greater needs and the number of children requiring out of home care is so much greater than it was in the past. Staffing levels need to be adequate if the goal is to protect children's safety, meet their needs and provide permanency for them.

Written testimony from Nancy Slattery, Maribel, WI:

August 26, 2021 Testimony to Members of Human Services Board of Manitowoc County on the occasion of the Annual Budget Hearing.

Back in 2013 I wrote that this board supervises a very fluid population of people and needs. I asked that best practices and the **goal of reducing the future needs of those currently receiving services be the guide in all the areas mandated by state statute.**

Again, I write "Realizing the responsibilities of the board are great, I pray for you and encourage each of you to see each "client" as yourself/ child/ grandchild/niece/or nephew." If it is not you; who direct the services to those who need it, who will? Often their needs get lost when upcoming election campaigns are planned.

Many changes have happened since then. Director Patricia Dodge has led a needed expansion of services and personal. The needs (as shown by the wait lists) far outstrip the budget now available to the department and the ability to hire qualified personnel. When the dust settles and the funding available to Manitowoc County since the COVID dollars were passed is known, I would like to hear that all positions are filled and no wait lists exist. When an acute need is seen, the response should not be-how will I be able to afford this in next year's budget, if I do it today. Rather if the need is met now, the expense in the future will be less and the individuals helped now will be better able to care for themselves.

First:

I ask that this HS Board request that the education topic for a future monthly meeting be presented by either the nonprofit group of Milwaukee Wisconsin Community Services or the Oneida Nation Behavioral Health Center, who were awarded one of those "hub-and-spoke" grants covering up to 2 ½ years. It would be very informative to have a public presentation of how that was organized to treat the "whole person".

The professional staff here, I am sure have personal access to updates and studies as they are published, if they have the time, but the general population is not so fortunate. If we can learn what the successful programs need in services and providers, we also can advocate for that here. If you think back to the beginnings of the public-school lunch program here in the city of Manitowoc, many years passed before the referendum was passed and the need was filled. Day care for children whose parents worked and seat belts are another one of the many year projects that are now considered standard and sensible options.

Second:

I want to address the cost of phone calls from those incarcerated out to their families and friends. When my son spent 6 months in 5 different federal prisons from GA, IN and WI, the phone was the only way we were able to communicate. Realizing all families want communication with persons in jail here in Manitowoc County too, why and how can the cost be so different in so many counties? Technology must be able to cross county lines, my and your cell phones call throughout the state as well as throughout the nation? Please ask for a report from the Sherriff and the police chiefs how the rate is determined in their facilities. It is not a direct responsibility of this board, but so many times the trauma of crime and the related experiences affect the whole family. And you as a member of this board know that. You see many incidents of dependents needing help due to someone else' abuse. For example, excessive alcohol use does not just damage the person drinking. It damages the whole family, and the community in so many ways. Apologies for not being present as I am at a memorial service today for my sister who died during COVID.

Since there was no other public comment, Mike Williams moved to close the Public Hearing and Laurie Burke seconded. Motion carried

The Public Hearing closed at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Bob Cavanaugh, Acting Secretary
Human Services Board

BC/jk